

**United Nations International Strategy for
Disaster Reduction /Regional Office in the
Americas
(UNISDR)**

**Organization of American States
(OAS)**

PROCEEDS

I SESSION OF THE REGIONAL PLATFORM
FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE RISK OF
DISASTERS IN THE AMERICAS

ON MARCH 17-19, 2009
CITY OF PANAMA, PANAMA





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I. Introduction

The growing number of disasters in most countries of the Americas has made it necessary for the countries of the region, cooperation agencies, institutions of the Inter-American and the UN systems, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, and the academic and scientific communities to join efforts in order to identify actions and priorities that will allow us to take more proactive and effective actions.

The outcome sought by these joint efforts is clearly defined in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters: “The substantial reduction of disaster losses, in lives and in the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.” Within this context, five priorities for action have been defined for the period ending in 2015. Progress on these priorities is promoted, supported, and monitored by the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) regional unit for the Americas, with the aim of implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in each of these countries. Tools used for this purpose include the National Platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction.



Background

In the region of the Americas, a preliminary consultative meeting took place in June 2006 in preparation for the first session of the Global Platform held in June 2007. Participants in this meeting emphasized the importance of a Regional Platform for Disaster Reduction in bringing together all existing coordinating mechanisms at regional and sub-regional levels, and in linking national efforts to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. They concluded that a regional platform is the logical extension of the national and global platforms and a key element for strengthening and consolidating national and global efforts towards the implementation of the HFA.

The purpose of this concept paper is to present an overview of the context leading up to the 1st Session of the UNISDR Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) Regional Platform of the Americas, and present thematic material to prepare for discussions at that first session covering implementation of the HFA at varying levels. The results of those discussions will further enrich the preparation of the **Report Surrounding the Commitments and Initiatives to Support the Implementation of the HFA from a Regional Perspective** with a view towards the 2nd Session of the Global Platform to be held in Geneva, on June 17-19, 2009.

The UNISDR HFA Regional Platform of the Americas is intended to serve as the overarching and permanent forum for the exchange of information and knowledge, and the coordination of efforts throughout the region providing advocacy for effective action to reduce disasters, for expanding the political space devoted to the issue, and for contributing to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.¹

¹Within the region of the Americas, a Preliminary Regional Consultation Meeting was held in June of 2006 in preparation for the First Session of the Global Platform held in June 2007. At that meeting, participants stressed the importance of a Regional Platform for Disaster Reduction for bringing together existing coordination mechanisms at both regional and sub-regional levels, as well as for linking national efforts to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action. It was concluded that a regional platform is the logical extension of national and global platforms, as well as a necessary element for strengthening and consolidating national and global efforts towards the implementation of the HFA. The Regional Platform will facilitate cross-fertilization between countries and sub-regions through promoting shared knowledge, lessons learnt, and regional and multilateral agreement, while helping to ensure sharing of disaster reduction information, planning and joint problem-solving with UN agencies, NGOs and Governments through strengthened collaboration and cooperation, the creation and/or strengthening of national, sub-regional and thematic platforms in the context of disaster risk reduction with adequate and useful supporting tools and instruments for their proper functioning. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the Regional Platform of the Americas will accelerate the integration of disaster risk reduction in priority areas of work, including urban risk, climate change, communications and education. Finally, it will allow for the review, validation and adoption of the reporting mechanism currently being devised by UNISDR, the importance of reporting by national governments, and a look at the regional reports intended as inputs to the Global Platform and Global Assessment Report. This will strengthen solidarity and



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In the framework of an agreement between the OAS General Secretariat and UNISDR, three consultants were hired in the months prior to the first session to conduct independent studies on the progress, trends, and the general situation of disaster risk reduction in Central America, the Caribbean, and in the Americas as a whole, respectively. These three studies were conducted to provide input for the discussions held before and during the first session of the Regional Platform, and to serve as reference documents for the Regional Platform.



Context

The United Nations' ISDR Secretariat, through its Regional Unit for the Americas (UNISDR The Americas), was identified as the main driving force to catalyze the process with the key function of coordinating and ensuring active participation and convening of key players from throughout the region.¹

The General Secretariat of the Organization of American States, through its Executive Secretariat for Integral Development and its Department of Sustainable Development (DSD/OAS), has been identified as the main strategic political partner / regional institution to coordinate HFA implementation², and as such is taking the lead role with the UNISDR The Americas in establishing the UNISDR HFA Regional Platform of the Americas, coconvening its 1st Session, and preparing the Regional Report.

Other key partners include the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)³ and The World Bank.⁴

In this context, it should be noted that the countries of the Americas have led the way in undertaking actions through binding commitments to address disaster risk reduction issues. Along with the countries' adoption of the HFA at the global level, they have adopted the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response (AG/Res.1955 (XXXIII-O/03)) (IASP) as the regional intergovernmental guidance for disaster risk reduction. Later the countries of the hemisphere established the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM), assigning it the unique position, "...as the permanent hemispheric mechanism for strengthening practical cooperation among intergovernmental agencies in the area of disaster reduction, especially by sharing technical information and best practices" (AG/Res. 2314 (XXXVII-O/07)).

¹ The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction of the United Nations (UNISDR) is a multi-disciplinary and multistakeholder platform to enable societies to increase their resilience to natural, technological and environmental disasters and to reduce associated environmental, human, economic and social losses. In keeping with the mandate of the UNISDR secretariat as the focal point in the United Nations system for the coordination of disaster reduction initiatives and with the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) as the main orienting tool, UNISDR's Regional Unit for the Americas (UNISDR Americas) strives to promote synergies and partnerships among the different stakeholders, State entities and nongovernment institutions to promote disaster risk reduction as an integral part of planning, policy and decision-making at all levels. It provides support to actors from throughout the region in promoting a culture of disaster prevention and contributing to build disaster resilient nations and communities through political advocacy, capacity-building, technical assistance and coordination.

² The Department of Sustainable Development (OAS/DSD) is the principal technical arm of the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS), responsible for meeting the needs of OAS member States in matters of sustainable development and environment. In keeping with OAS' mandate as the main political body in the Western Hemisphere for promoting social and economic development through cooperation, OAS/DSD supports the formulation, design and execution of policies and technical cooperation projects that help translate the goals of sustainable development and environment protection into concrete action. A key objective of this work involves natural disaster risk management as an essential component for development.

³ Supporting sustainable development, reducing poverty and providing humanitarian assistance, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is the Canadian Government's lead agency for development assistance. Through CIDA, Canada provides support to the UNISDR and other key international disaster risk reduction in support of the HFA.

⁴ In June 2006, the World Bank's Board of Directors endorsed the establishment of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), a longer term partnership under the ISDR system to reduce disaster losses by mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in development, particularly upstream country strategies and processes, towards fulfillment of principal goals of the Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA).



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On occasion of the first session of the Global Platform, held in June 2007, the UNISDR and the GS/OAS signed a cooperation agreement to advance the implementation of the HFA in the Americas, as well as the IASP. Subsequently, they signed a supplementary instrument in August 2008, to be implemented jointly with the Regional Platform, in order to put into practice the HFA in the Americas. In this context, the first session of the Regional Platform in the Americas was held in March 2009.



II. Objectives of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

The Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas has the following general objectives:

- Assess progress made in implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.
- Enhance awareness of disaster risk reduction.
- Share experiences among countries and learn from good practice.
- Identify remaining gaps and actions needed to accelerate national and local implementation of the Hyogo Framework.

Specifically, the Regional Platform is intended to:

- Increase the profile of disaster risk reduction as an integral aspect of sustainable development and adaptation to climate change, recognizing that it is “everybody’s business” and must be a multi-stakeholder undertaking with governments playing a central role;
- Reiterate the commitment of policy and decision-makers to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action;
- Strengthen the cross-fertilization between the national platforms and the global platform, supporting greater coordination at the various levels.
- Learn from good practice;
- Provide practical suggestions for regional and sub-regional initiatives in support of national and community efforts to reduce disaster risk; and
- Assess progress made in implementing the HFA, and identify obstacles, critical problems and emerging issues that must be addressed to speed up national and local implementation of disaster risk reduction including the priorities of the ISDR system for 2008-2009.

Objetives of the Regional Platform 2009

In keeping with this vision and as the first-ever session of the Regional Platform, the general objectives of the hemispheric meeting to be held in Panama from 17-19 March, 2009 are:

1. Launch the Americas Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction as a regional cooperation mechanism among institutions and processes working in DRR and which facilitates the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.
2. To identify the key stakeholders and assign clear roles and responsibilities for the creation of the Regional Platform Council as the main committee for leading the Platform in the coming years.
3. To create working groups on thematic areas of interest to the region based on the five priorities for action as decided upon at the World Conference for Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan in 2005 as expressed in the Hyogo Framework for Action and adopted by 168 countries worldwide.
4. Provide inputs from the region to be taken to the second session of the Global Platform to be held in Geneva, Switzerland in June of 2009.



The first biennial session of the Regional Platform of the Americas will focus on the following elements of HFA and IASP implementation:

1. Reviewing and analyzing existing instruments at the hemispheric level within the Inter-American System to support and advance implementation of the HFA implementation;
2. Identifying overlaps and potential discrepancies between the UNISDR HFA and the OAS IASP, so as to draw recommendation for better alignment of the OAS IASP with the UNISDR HFA;
3. Establishing a common reporting process for the UNISDR HFA Regional Platform and the OAS IASP; and
4. Reviewing existing instruments and arrangements between the sub-regional and hemispheric inter-governmental organizations (IGO), so as to identify each organization's value added and areas of competence, needs for capacity building, and needs for supplementary arrangements including legal, administrative, technical and financial instruments for promoting synergies and inter-agency cooperation across all levels from hemispheric to regional, national and local levels.

Specific objectives of this session will therefore include the following:

1. Identify actions to strengthen cooperation among existing mechanisms and processes to ensure the inclusion of risk reduction in all development sectors and at all levels, and thus, achieve the main objective of the HFA to substantially reduce disaster losses, in terms of human lives and livelihoods as well as in social, economic and environmental assets of communities and nations.
2. Promote coordination of efforts and creation of new partnerships and/or strengthen existing ones for HFA and IASP implementation of HFA and IASP;
3. Foster understanding of the HFA reporting mechanism to enhance feedback, to validate and appropriate the mechanism to facilitate improved and more systematized reporting throughout the region, and to support the strengthening of National Platforms;
4. Identify specific opportunities for cross-fertilization between countries and subregions for exchanging information, as well as inter-government and inter-sector cooperation; and
5. Disseminate the main outcomes of the meeting with respect to their risk trends and progress through the Internet by the UNISDR secretariat, the INDM Web Portal, and the ISDR and INDM partners and supporters.



III. Methodology

On January 28, a preparatory meeting took place in Panama City, Panama with the participation of key partners of UNISDR and the OAS Department of Sustainable Development (DSD), including the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response agency (CDERA); the Association of Caribbean States (ACS); the Coordinating Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPRENAC); the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief (CAPRADE); the United Nations Development Program Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP/BCPR); the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO); the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP); and the Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC) and The World Bank (WB). This meeting focused on key aspects of preparation for the first session, including the methodology to be used at the meeting, priority areas for plenary and thematic sessions, the focus of the three independent sub-regional and hemispheric studies, and the meeting agenda, among others. The feedback of those present at the meeting was helpful for reviewing the documents and materials, which are available on the UNISDR Americas website. This preparatory work was essential for finalizing the agenda and determining the focus of the meeting held as part of the first session of the Regional Platform.

In order to achieve the goals and ensure a successful meeting, a taskforce was established with staff from both the UNISDR Americas and the OAS/DSD. The taskforce was responsible for: a) general coordination; b) logistics; and c) content. At the same time, a preliminary document was drafted outlining the general organizational structure of the meeting. It was agreed that there would be four plenary sessions and nine thematic and parallel sessions.

During the meeting interviews were conducted with 23 participants who were previously selected because of their involvement or significant representation in the region. These interviews were based on a series of points of interest established in advance. The event included a photo gallery, as well as informational stands and cultural and social activities. Each plenary and thematic session had a moderator, a rapporteur, and panelists who were identified in advance. In order to homogenize the results, methodological guides were prepared for the moderators and summary templates were developed to record the content of the thematic sessions.





IV. Opening session

Pablo González

*Chief, Risk Management and Adaptation to Climate Change (RISK-MACC) Coordinator for Central America
General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS)*



The Americas is perhaps the global region that presents the most advanced positions adopted by member states in Disaster Reduction.

The Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response – known as IASP, adopted at the Thirty Third General Assembly in 2003, represents a milestone in the Americas and a benchmark for the OAS as it moves away from a predominant focus on humanitarian assistance towards integrated, multi-lateral cooperation for addressing the underlying causes of natural disasters: poverty, environmental degradation, lack of risk assessments in public and private investments, and lack of integration of risk management into development policy and planning by each productive, economic and social sector.

In the Americas today, we understand that vulnerability reduction and risk management are central to sustainable development.

Sustainable development will not be achieved unless risk management is well integrated across all sectors and all levels of governance. Risk management is not a sector, nor a stand alone theme in our development agendas. It is everybody's responsibility: farmers, energy production and grid operators, highways administrations and concessionaires, water supply and sanitation system operators, tourism developers and operators, natural resource, park and reserves planners and managers, health providers, municipal planners and local governments. It is everybody's business.

The Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR), established on June 7th, 1999, through the OAS General Assembly resolution AG/Res.1682 (XXXIX- 0/99), provides for a hemispheric forum on which the Regional Platform for Disaster Reduction can be built, as it convenes all Inter-American Sister Organizations, all relevant Regional Intergovernmental Organizations, namely SICA, CARICOM, ACS, and CAN, and all relevant UN System agencies. Development banks, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and multi-lateral and bilateral cooperation agencies, who participate in the Committee by invitation, make up what can become the Regional Platform.



The OAS and Regional Inter-governmental Organizations adopt the UNISDR and OAS Regional Platform concept, as the annual reporting mechanism for HFA and IASP implementation; and jointly support the implementation of intersectoral National Platforms.

Political regional bodies, such as SICA, CARICOM, ACS and CAN, define regional development policies, which are further formulated and implemented through their specialized sector agencies, as well as NGOs, bilaterals and business associations.

Specialized regional sector agencies carry the means to most effectively address disaster risk reduction from its roots; the sectors that build risk, and are responsible for reducing vulnerability and mitigating the impacts of natural events in the infrastructure they build, operate and maintain.

Regional emergency response agencies, on the other hand, bear the unique position to raise awareness and political will for increasing investments in vulnerability reduction and risk assessments. While their main task must continue to be providing coordinated emergency response, they have also a unique opportunity –provided in and by each natural event, to assign accountability to those who own the risk.

The Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM), established by AG/Res.

2314, in June of 2007, as per the recommendations of the first Inter-American Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of Sustainable Development, in December 2006, in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, is expected to become the operational and executive hemispheric branch to support the decisions of the IACNDR and advance practical collaboration among OAS Member States in matters of disaster risk reduction.

The XXXVII General Assembly, convened in Panama, recognized INDM “...as the permanent hemispheric mechanism for strengthening practical cooperation among intergovernmental agencies in the area of disaster reduction, especially by sharing technical information and best practices.” AG/Res. 2314 further recognizes the need to coordinate efforts with relevant agencies of the United Nations System in order to implement HFA adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in Kobe, Japan, in January, 2005. INDM is the natural operational arm of the IACNDR and the Regional Platform, providing for the exchange of information, knowledge and experience. More particularly, it can support the building of functional and operational National Platforms.

UNISDR National Platforms must not be limited to a reporting mechanism, but instead must be established as functional and organizational structures capable to integrate disaster risk reduction into the development agenda across all productive, economic and social sectors, all segments of the society –government, universities, religious groups, NGOs, private enterprises, and the civil society as whole, and all levels of government – from local to central.

A clear division of responsibilities, functions and areas of action must be agreed among all the Inter-American and UN Systems agencies so as to optimize resources –not only from bilateral and multilateral cooperation, but mainly from national governments.

IDB, the World Bank, and regional banks –BCIE, CDB, CAF and FONPLATA, among others, must come together to provide the financial support required to execute the Regional Platform.

SG/OAS, PAHO, IICA, and other Inter-American sister organizations must work together to avoid duplications and a more effective and efficient cooperation.



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Regional Intergovernmental Organizations, SICA, CARICOM, ACS and CAN, must work together their institutional agendas in harmony with SG/OAS so as to ensure a single message, and an optimal use of resources.

And National Governments must ensure tight coordination among their ministries, and they must communicate a single set of priorities throughout all their representations, Embassies, and Missions to the OAS, UN, and Regional Intergovernmental Organizations. In the end, the ability to optimize resources and coordinate international cooperation resides in themselves. It is little what we, the intergovernmental organizations and the international cooperation community, can do to coordinate among ourselves, if we all respond to mandates and directives that often follow different priorities, many times are competing, and at worst, they are contradictory.

The Americas has come a long way since 1965, when the -American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM) was established at the Second Special Inter-American Conference of the OAS “to provide available social, humanitarian, material, technical, and financial aid to any member state of the Organization that is threatened by, has suffered from, or is in an emergency situation caused by natural disasters.”

The Inter-American Convention to Facilitate Disaster Assistance adopted, in 1991, by OAS member States is the only regional binding instrument in the World for disaster assistance. The Convention represents a breakthrough from soft law, recognizing the potential contribution of international law in the field of disasters, and it is applicable whenever a state party furnishes assistance in response to a request from another state party and provides a comprehensive framework to address key issues of disaster assistance –including mechanisms for national coordination; direction and control of assistance; transport of vehicles, equipment and supplies; access and transit routes; security; and claims and indemnity. It also regulates the participation of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and defines the rules of procedure for all assistance personnel and the need for direct supervision from the assisted state. Some of the provisions in the Convention address the challenges and concerns currently faced by countries in disaster situations, such as the coordination of assistance, establishing the appointment of a National Coordinating Authority and the channels through which aid must be requested.

So, now it's the time to put all these mechanisms, instruments, and tools to work for the good of our most vulnerable communities; in the Americas, those located in international border areas, far from the capitals and even farther away from national development plans; our indigenous people, and those socially and economically marginalized groups.

Finally, we hope that as a concrete outcome of this 1st Session of the Regional Platform, we can bring to our organizations a set of agreements that can be further translate into operative decisions at the next meeting of the Inter-American Committee on Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR).

We can make the commitment to convene the next meeting of IACCNDR before June 2009, so as to arrive to San Pedro Sula, at the XXXIX OAS General Assembly, and to Geneva, at the Second Session of the Global Platform, with a clear path towards the implementation of a functional and structured Regional Platform; provided that we come out from this meeting with concrete ideas and actions to take to our Secretary Generals and Heads of our Inter-American System sister organizations.

In closing, on behalf of the OAS General Secretariat, I thank UNISDR and its partners, and all National Platforms represented in this event, for convening us all together, here in Panama, to move this agenda forward for a common purpose of democracy and prosperity in union of the Americas.

Thank you.



Sálvano Briceño
Director, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)



Minister Dilio Arcia, Vice-Chancellor Ricardo Durán, Mr. Luis Francisco Sucre, Director of SINAPROC and focal point of the UNISDR in Panama, and Mr. Pablo González, Chief of the Risk Management Program, Department of Sustainable Development, OAS.

Dear colleagues, delegates and friends:

I am pleased to welcome you on behalf of my colleagues in our Panama office and from the other UNISDR offices. For the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), this first session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction represents a milestone in the development of new regional and global alliances and in strengthening the ties established in recent years.

I wish to give a special thanks to the Government of Panama for its support for this meeting and for our office as well. I can assure you that the City of Knowledge is meeting its objectives: its installation has greatly facilitated knowledge development, as well as team work with the other international organizations present there.

We are honored to have had the opportunity to organize this session in close collaboration with the Organization of American States (OAS), which represents the institutions that make up the Inter-American system. In the 1990s, the OAS was among the first organizations to address the issue of risk prevention and reduction with the creation of the Inter-American Committee for Natural Disaster Reduction, and has worked on disaster issues since the 1960s, through the Inter-American Emergency Aid Fund (FONDEM). We are pleased to be able to join our efforts to yours.



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Undoubtedly, linking the Inter-American institutions with the capacity of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system will result in a stronger and more effective framework to support the needs of governments and communities throughout the region.

Since the UNISDR was launched in 2000, we have observed progress in the area of risk reduction around the world. Yet, we also know that much remains to be done. Even as we work to identify the gaps and shortcomings during the next few days, it is always good to review the progress that has been made, acknowledge the achievements, and allow them to serve as our inspiration to continue working with dedication and enthusiasm on this topic of common concern.

Since the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) in January 2005, just a few days after the terrible tsunami in the Indian Ocean, a number of platforms have been developed in all regions of the world to strengthen regional cooperation pursuant to the HFA recommendations. In Africa, Asia, Europe, the Pacific and the Arab world, mechanisms or platforms are already in place to advance regional programs in support of and as a complement to government action. While the UNISDR system supports these platforms, they are led by the intergovernmental mechanisms existing in those regions.

In the United Nations framework, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has made disaster risk reduction a key issue, and one that he personally promotes and highlights during his trips and bilateral meetings with Heads of State and Government. In addition, a management structure that includes the World Bank, UNDP, WMO, UNEP, OCHA and the IFRC supervises and advises the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, as the coordinator of the UNISDR global system. Recently, Ms. Margareta Wahlström (Sweden) was appointed as the new Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the HFA. Her appointment has raised the profile and visibility of this issue within the UN system.

Beginning this year, the main tasks of the UN Resident Coordinators include promoting and facilitating disaster risk reduction, and supporting governments in the implementation of the HFA.

The Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction —as an international forum that brings together all sectors working on this issue, including government agencies and other stakeholders, such as the private sector, NGOs, academics, parliamentarians, and local authorities— held its first session in 2007 and is preparing for its second session, scheduled for June 16-19, 2009 in Geneva. The purpose of this gathering will be to identify and propose actions to address existing obstacles and gaps in the implementation of the HFA.

Climate change negotiators have acknowledged and begun to treat disaster risk reduction as a critical component of climate change adaptation. After the Bali Action Plan formally recognized this issue at the COP 13, and reaffirmed it at the COP 14 held in Poznan, last week the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held a workshop in Havana on risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The workshop was organized with the support of and close collaboration of the UNISDR secretariat and its partners. Likewise, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has scheduled a workshop in Oslo, which will be held in two weeks time, in order to initiate a more in-depth study into risk management of the extreme climate events that are anticipated. This workshop has also been organized in close collaboration with the UNISDR secretariat and its partners.

It is very likely that the Copenhagen agreement, expected to be adopted in December 2009 or early 2010, will include natural hazard risk and vulnerability reduction as a key component for climate change adaptation. Should this be the case, governments will have more resources at their disposal for implementing the Hyogo Framework



for Action. I therefore recommend that those involved in risk reduction seek the closest possible collaboration with the climate change divisions in their government or organizations.

The UNISDR has developed a longstanding and close relationship with the World Bank in the context of the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, which has provided services to the most vulnerable countries in order to strengthen their risk reduction capacities.

Other important UNISDR partnerships include joint undertakings with UNDP, WHO and, particularly in this region, with PAHO, which has been a pioneer in the field of risk reduction, particularly regarding health policies. In conjunction with PAHO, we are currently conducting an intensive campaign for the protection of hospitals and other health facilities. This and other joint efforts with international, regional and sub-regional organizations within and outside the UN system (UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, FAO, WFP and HABITAT, among others) have raised the profile of this issue. I am pleased to see so many of these UNISDR partners present in this meeting.

At the national level, many governments have made progress in developing national disaster prevention and preparedness systems, in some cases creating national and local platforms especially devoted to risk reduction. Furthermore, civil protection and defense systems, or similar structures, have strengthened their capacities, and governments and other institutions are increasingly using the Hyogo Framework for Action as their point of reference.

At the local level, a number of very interesting programs are mobilizing local resources from municipal governments and communities, schools and universities to advance risk reduction. All of these are positive achievements to date.

Unfortunately, the scope of these efforts is not proportionate to the magnitude of the problem. In practice, it is clear that investments in risk reduction are still insufficient. Even as mortality rates have been reduced tangibly in the case of some hazards, negative trends in terms of the impact on livelihoods and economic assets have intensified and are cause for concern.

These are some of the findings of the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction, which is scheduled for release on May 11. We recommend that it be studied carefully and thoroughly in preparation for the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Geneva on June 16-19, 2009. This session is expected to mark the beginning of the mid-term review of the Hyogo Framework for Action, in order to identify priority actions for 2010-2015 that will enable us to meet the goals established by the HFA.

We are indeed far from achieving an investment level that enables us to meet these goals and ensure a sustainable impact on vulnerability areas, which are expanding rapidly due to intensive urbanization processes and the degradation of key ecosystems for reducing risk and climate change.

The failure to invest sufficient resources in risk management poses another risk, namely that of becoming caught up in a vicious circle from which it is hard to extricate: more extensive damage hampers economic recovery, leading to a decline in investment in sustainable development and social programs such as education, which in turn generates more damage during adverse events, and so on.

Regarding this session of the regional platform, what are the goals that have been identified and proposed by the organizers, the Organization of American States and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction?



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First, we would like to emphasize that according to the goals of the Global Platform, the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas is meant to serve as a broad forum for exchanging information and knowledge, coordinating efforts throughout the region, providing support for effective disaster reduction actions, expanding the political space allocated to this issue, and contributing to the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

In particular, we believe that this meeting will generate recommendations in the following areas:

- Reviewing the implementation of the HFA and identifying priorities for the 2010-2015 period, to be discussed during the second session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in June 2009, including climate change, urban risk, health and education, and other issues identified as priorities.*
- Strengthening all related regional and sub-regional processes, including those of the OAS and the Inter-American system, UNISDR and its partners within and outside the UN System, as well as the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB) and system, ECLAC, the Rio Group, the Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA), the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) the Coordinating Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPRENAC), and the Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief (CAPRADE), and improving coordination and team work to better respond to the needs of the nations and communities in the region.*
- Strengthening inter-institutional or multisectoral mechanisms to advance risk reduction at national and local levels, such as national disaster prevention and preparedness systems, and national and local platforms for disaster risk reduction. This includes humanitarian aid programs developed by some countries of the region, which provide very valuable services.*

As a key element for following up on the recommendations made during the first session of the Regional Platform, the UNISDR regional unit and the OAS/DSD will facilitate cooperation efforts among governments and relevant UN agencies, the Inter-American system and other regional and sub-regional institutions. I believe that this first meeting of the Regional Platform will produce new ideas and alliances.

The quality of the recommendations made during this meeting will depend upon the discussions and the interaction among all of the participants. It is with great enthusiasm that my colleagues and I will make ourselves available to facilitate your discussions, as the main actors of disaster reduction in the region.

Thank you.



*Dr. Dilio Arcila
Minister of Government and Justice
Government of Panama*



I am very pleased to attend this event on disaster risk reduction through a work platform whose mission is to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, and respond to disasters in the region of the Americas. The National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was officially established in the Republic of Panama on December 16, 2005, supported by Executive Decree 402 of November 12, 2002, which established the National Commission of CEPREDENAC in Panama, one of the first of these commissions to be created. The Commission agreed to take national actions aimed at reducing the impact of disasters in vulnerable communities, in compliance with the Hyogo Framework for Action, established during the Second World Conference on Disaster Reduction held in Kobe, Japan in January 2005. The nation of Panama is proud to have an institution like the National Service for Civil Protection (SINAPROC), which in just a little over 25 years has gained the trust of the citizenry and made great strides in the areas of safety and risk prevention. It has also been able to integrate into the Central American protection system through its effective presence within the Coordinating Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC), which specializes in this difficult task of warning about potential tragedies while also acting in a timely manner to protect lives in our communities.

This First Session will provide input from our region that will contribute to the discussions during the second session of the Global Platform to be held in Geneva, Switzerland in June this year.

We hope that this gathering will permit the exchange of experiences among the countries of the region, that it will become a broad and permanent forum for all partners involved in the field of disaster risk reduction, and that it will lead us to consolidate a multidisciplinary taskforce in the interests of complying with the Hyogo Framework for Action, thus benefitting vulnerable communities throughout the Americas.



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The development and implementation of regional and global approaches for reducing vulnerability to socio-natural risks related, for example, to water, climate change, or inadequate land use is a healthy and necessary ambition. Just as important are the establishment of new agreements for cooperation, learning, and the modernization of the institutions in charge of preventing disasters in the region and throughout the world. These are essential responses to the ever-growing challenges that nature is imposing on us, in part, perhaps, because of our use and abuse of the gifts of Earth.

Linking preparedness and mitigation efforts to an ongoing practice of prevention is part of integrated risk management, and it is something that must be commended. Our globalized world can sometimes cause us harm, perhaps, because we see the gaps that are being caused by great inequalities. But it is also true that its noble side allows us all to interact to reach goals that will benefit all of humanity.

This first session of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction is a great example. We are pleased that Panama could be the host of such an effort that is not only noble but also wise and highly respectable. It is an effort where scientific achievements and human intelligence meet, and we can all clearly see that the key to the protection of our citizens lies in ensuring solid participation and solidarity among communities and through institutions devoted to risk prevention.

The goal here is to formalize the creation of a regional platform, its primary structure and action plan, as well as to identify primary actors and create taskforces that ensure compliance with the Hyogo Framework for Action. I cannot help but be astonished when I do an inventory of the natural tragedies that have occurred and the work that institutions like those present today have done. Like all citizens, and as part of this regional and interconnected universe, I celebrate initiatives like this one because it is about life. We do prevention work and we educate in order to preserve life. I am extremely pleased to formally open this meeting, and on behalf of the President of the Panama, Mr. Martín Torrijos Espino, I express to you the warmest welcome to our country and wish you the greatest success in this edifying meeting.

Thank you very much.



V. Outcomes

Approximately 300 people participated in the first session of the Regional Platform, including representatives of national governments and ministries, UN agencies, NGOs, international cooperation and financial institutions, the private sector and the technical scientific community. About 140 of those registered were from the countries of the region and 103 were from international and regional inter-governmental organizations, among others. Out of the total of country participants, 39% were from Central America, 30% from South America, 20% from the Caribbean, and 11% from North America (the United States, Canada, and Mexico) (see Annex 1).

The first session served to highlight the trends and advances made in the region, to reach consensus on a regional approach that can be presented during the second session of the Global Platform, and to determine the priority steps towards the second session of the Regional Platform. The meeting also helped advance an agenda to put into practice the main objective of the HFA: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters by 2015.

Concrete outcomes include three independent studies on the progress, trends, and general situation of disaster risk reduction in the Central American sub-region, in the Caribbean, and in the Americas as a whole. These were discussed at the preparatory meeting, and they were presented and discussed during this first session. The studies were finalized after the session, incorporating the observations and comments of the participants. Other outcomes include summaries and presentations during the plenary and thematic sessions, as well as other documents and materials produced prior to the meeting.



First Plenary Session Part A

Moderator: Pablo González, OAS
Rapporteur: Fernando Ramírez, UNISDR consultant
Panelists:
David Smith, Sub-Regional Study for the Central American Isthmus
Stephen Bender, Hemispheric Study
Franklin McDonald, Sub-Regional Study for the Caribbean States



This plenary session included presentations made by representatives of the Inter-American system, focusing on a vision of and an integrated perspective on risk management within the ACS, CARICOM, CAN and SICA systems.



Presentations also focused on the following questions, which were made known in advance:

- What progress has been made in disaster risk management in the region?
- How is disaster risk management being integrated into different economic and social sectors (agriculture, transportation, energy, health and sanitation, trade, education, finance, planning)?
- What challenges and opportunities can be identified regarding the achievement of greater and better collaboration among agencies and regions within the Inter-American system for attaining disaster risk reduction?
- What priority actions should be taken to reduce disaster risk in the region's poorest communities, and how could your organization contribute to achieving this goal, as well as to strengthening the regional, sub-regional and national platforms for disaster risk reduction?

Luis Fernando Andrade Falla
Secretary-General
Association of Caribbean States (ACS)

“...The Association of Caribbean States is a regional advisory, coordination and cooperation organization comprising 25 countries of this continent, including 14 members of CARICOM, 5 from Central America, and Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. There are also three associate members represented by France (Martinique, Guadalupe and French Guyana) as overseas territories, and the founding members of SICA, SIECA and CARICOM.

Phenomena that represent recurring hazards tend to be altered and aggravated by the effects of climate change. There is scientific evidence of this and in recent years the Great Caribbean has registered and suffered the consequences of this new climate and environmental influence derived from human activity, for which this region bears no responsibility whatsoever.

In recognition of the importance of the commitments made through the HFA, the ACS began a process of internal and external technical consultations to align its natural disaster agenda with this global framework. This first stage concluded with a high-level conference on disaster risk reduction, which took place in Saint-Marc, Haiti. Participating delegations adopted the Saint-Marc Action Plan, a document that identifies in a comprehensive manner 27 internal and/or external cooperation areas which the ACS may contribute to and support, in coordination with international and sub-regional specialized agencies. Moreover, the Saint-Marc Action Plan is based on the five priorities established by the HFA.

The Great Caribbean faces enormous challenges and the way to strengthen national capacity is through enhanced cooperation and coordination among institutions and bodies within the region.



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The ACS is well prepared to contribute to this effort, which requires working formulas that transcend political and ideological differences in the initiatives presented and discussed in this forum. There should be no exclusions of any kind, if what we are seeking is a Great Caribbean characterized by greater solidarity, integration and disaster preparedness...”

Jeremy Collymore
Coordinator
CDERA / CARICOM

“...First, the Caribbean Community is a small association of developing States that firmly recognizes the commitment to and the importance of sustainable development. In this context, the pillars of integration in the Caribbean, particularly at the level of CARICOM, are found in a strategy for understanding disasters and for development, as well as in redirecting CARICOM’s leadership to achieve a more functional cooperation centered on implementing the Caribbean Community’s program, as reflected on the Treaty of Chaguarama. The latter guides the operating principles and lays out the architectural landscape for progress in disaster reduction within the development process.

Another challenge is our response to the organizations that are formed around the issue of climate change and pursuant to other global actions. The Caribbean Community hopes that one outcome of this platform is a process to clarify these initiatives. CARICOM has begun to make available an entity equipped to address this serious problem. We also believe that the issue of safety in many developing countries will provide an opportunity to address existing vulnerabilities in our infrastructure. The Caribbean Community believes that the safety of our infrastructure must become a priority. The Caribbean Community also sees this as an opportunity to include the establishment of an environmental and natural resource policy, which we believe will be very beneficial in this context.

The issue of the nature of this platform should not be a passive discussion, but rather should enrich the issues posed by the Council of the Americas, a hemisphere-wide institution. All of this will depend on how we make progress in these issues regarding the political agenda, and the key discussions that we hold today...”



Lorena Cajas Alban
President pro-tempore
Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief (CAPRADE)

It is important to motivate, work with and involve communicators, so as to ensure the adequate dissemination of information and messages designed to raise awareness about risk reduction. Some progress has been made in some planning areas in terms of developing common guidelines to build strengths at the territorial level and increase their sustainability. Ecuador, for instance, has established mandatory constitutional principles through amendments to its Constitution, which have strengthened and galvanized disaster risk management efforts.

In response to emergency situations, cooperation has been sought through mutual aid guidelines approved implemented by voluntary groups in order to homogenize conditions based on territorial similarities. Risk and management, must be integrated as a cross-cutting issue and it must be regarded as a process, so that citizens think about how to mitigate risks in their daily activities. Another challenge is how to work at the policy level to ensure a cross-cutting and sector-based approach to this issue, so that disaster risk reduction (DRR) is included on the political agenda in each of our States. The presence of the Andean Committee has been pivotal for the successes achieved and for the commitment of the countries to mutual support and assistance..."



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Iván Morales

Executive Secretary

Coordinating Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC)

“...CEPREDENAC is a regional intergovernmental organization that belongs to the Central American Integration System (SICA), as a specialized secretariat.

The Center promotes and advocates cooperation among all member States and those from other sub-regions in order to share technical and scientific knowledge in a systematized manner that is accessible to the entire region.

Hurricane Mitch exposed the extremely high vulnerability of communities and certain sectors to such phenomena. We now recognize the strong correlation between such events and other challenges, including threats to peace, poverty and inequality, which increase vulnerability to hazards.

Consultations are currently underway to update the Action Plan for 2010-2015, to initiate an inter-institutional coordination process with the same objective as this meeting, and to develop a unified Central American policy that takes an integrated and multisectoral approach to risk reduction and prevention. To this end, it is necessary to establish a high-level dialogue interface with other stakeholders and sectors responsible for disaster reduction management, in order to remain current in the debate over the application and implementation of international frameworks, such as the HFA...”



First Plenary Session

Part B

Summary of the Regional and Sub-Regional Studies

David A. Smith Wiltshire

Sub-Regional Study for the Central American Isthmus

Moderator: Pablo González, OAS
Rapporteurs: Gloria Bratschi and Berta Fernández
Panelists:
Luis Fernando Andrade, ACS
Jeremy Collymore, CARICOM
Lorena Cajas Alban, CAPRADE (CAN)
Iván Morales, CEPREDENAC (SICA)





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Independent Consultant

1. In terms of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and compliance with the Hyogo Framework for Action, countries have made clear progress towards the creation and implementation of the National Platforms. However, gaps, deficiencies, and challenges still remain.
2. Gathering to organize the Regional (hemispheric) Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas is a very complex challenge that requires deliberation about organization, modes of operation, and usefulness.
3. The idea of risk management and disaster risk reduction prevails in discourse, concepts, academic exercises, workshops, conferences, and formal agreements, but this is not translating into prevention. What prevails is still emergency response and disaster preparedness.
4. Risk Management, and its most operative component, disaster risk reduction, are more a part of development than disasters per se. This work deals with saving lives (in the first place) but increasingly, it also has to do with the important work of securing livelihoods and ensuring adequate living conditions. Identifying, recognizing, controlling, and reducing vulnerabilities will guarantee these things to the population.
5. In order for these issues to be dealt with responsibly, efficiently, and permanently, they must be part of government and development policies.
6. One mandate that came from the 20th Summit of Central American Presidents (October 1999) and is reaffirmed in the Hyogo Framework for Action (January 2005), which is still pending or insufficiently achieved, could become one of the primary objectives of a Regional (hemispheric) Platform: To ensure that disaster risk reduction is incorporated as a concept, condition, and daily practice into the planning and execution of sustainable development at national, sectoral, and territorial levels.
7. The Regional Platform must play a strategic and political role in strengthening countries and national platforms, which in turn are responsible for promoting disaster risk reduction in each country.
8. In this sense, the already existing sub-regional organizations (CARICOM, SICA, ACS, and CAN) must use their corresponding convening powers and their political machinery (Councils of Ministers, mandates, and agendas) to provide political support and become a mechanism through which the Platform can operate.
9. We propose a paradigm shift that treats disaster risk reduction as part of development work instead of disaster-related work.
10. This paradigm shift requires clarification of its content, basic concept, methodology, actors, actions, and results. By changing the paradigm, we will be making progress by putting an end to the monologue and eulogies of the “Club of the Convinced”, who repeatedly meet to deliberate “among ourselves” and “not with others” about risk management.



11. The sectors that may in principle become a vanguard in the promotion of this new disaster risk management/ reduction paradigm are: a) Agriculture and livestock; b) Tourism; c) Infrastructure (with an emphasis on transportation); d) Energy and communications; and e) Environment and natural resources (in the context of the comprehensive management of water resources and adaptation to climate change as related to DRR).
12. In this sense, the Regional Platform is a great opportunity to promote and reaffirm this new paradigm, through political and strategic work that ensures broader participation in the discussions, especially of national, sectoral, and territorial political authorities, as well as organizations and scientific groups that specialize in certain thematic areas and that work at the sub-regional and regional levels.
13. Moreover, the Regional Platform should coordinate with SICA an appeal to commemorate in October 2009 the 10th anniversary of the 20th Summit of Presidents, the approval and launching of the Strategic Framework for Disaster Vulnerability and Impact Reduction in Central America, in addition to the Regional Disaster Reduction Plan, and the Central American Quinquennium for Disaster Vulnerability and Impact Reduction (2000-2004).

Stephen Bender
Hemisphere-wide Study
Independent Consultant

“... In general, since 1965, the countries and the regions of the Organization of American States, its general secretariat and various bodies, have created and implemented policies, programs, and emergency management and vulnerability reduction actions. For more than two decades, a number of sub-regional initiatives have implemented disaster risk reduction initiatives, focused initially on disaster response and on emergency management topics, a tendency that was maintained through the Declaration of Cartagena in 1994.”

Some countries in the hemisphere have broadened, deepened and expanded their emergency management and/or response agendas, vis-à-vis vulnerability reduction, with the support of sub-regional intergovernmental organizations and their specialized disaster risk management agencies, many of which are present here today.

With the adoption of tools such as the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response, one of the most important initiatives in the region, the HFA has become a priority input.

Currently, national platforms are focusing on vulnerability reduction as a priority action for risk reduction. However, governments have yet to conduct follow-up activities to determine to what degree it is being applied and how much progress has been made in DRR at the local level, as well as its contribution at the sub-regional level.

Disaster reduction must become a development issue. Hence, there is the need to include it on national development agendas and in the allocation of adequate resources.



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In the broadest sense, there has been progress in terms of implementation, particularly in emergency management. However, many of these emergencies occurred as the result of a known vulnerability, and yet no action was taken to reduce it. What is worse, vulnerability is increasing as a result of development-related issues that are not sustainable, a development approach that simply tries to fill in the gaps between what is required or wanted and what exists.

Sub-regional platforms have made important progress in reducing the loss of human life, but the economic impact continues to grow in terms of damage and losses in social systems and infrastructure. For this reason, we issue an appeal for efforts focused mainly on reducing the loss of social, economic and environmental assets, and on reducing the magnitude of the population at risk.

It is important, then, to insist on the application and implementation of the principles included in the Hyogo Framework for Action and to establish a policy geared toward DRR in development agendas...”

Franklin McDonald
Sub-regional Study for the Caribbean States
Independent Consultant

“...The approach adopted has been to focus on problems, challenges and gaps in disaster risk reduction and on HFA related initiatives in the Caribbean.

Unquestionable progress has been made in the efforts of Caribbean countries to apply disaster risk reduction policies and meet the HFA goals.

Many countries have attempted to incorporate the MAH into existing emergency management mechanisms, and there is wide acceptance of the urgent need to make the transition from the current reactive response to a more proactive approach to risk.

At the regional level, the Caribbean has made a decision through its top officials in CARICOM to transform a key body —namely the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency (CDERA)— into a new institution, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) in 2009.



Second Plenary Session

Moderator: Ricardo Zapata, ECLAC
Rapporteur: Luis Carlos Martínez M., UNISDR Consultant
Panelists:
Liz Riley, CDERA
Lorena Cajas, CAPRADE
Iván Morales, CEPREDENAC

Liz Riley
Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA)



The speakers' presentations focused on the following questions:

1. How can your organization help focal points in strengthening the national platforms for disaster risk reduction and implementing the HFA strategies and priorities?
2. How is your region making progress in integrating development policies into disaster reduction and poverty reduction?
3. How can aid agencies help to integrate disaster risk reduction into the national development agenda?



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“...Territorial development agencies should definitely be taken into account as strategic partners for implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), within each country’s national platform.

Today, these agencies are internalizing the importance of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and supporting countries’ use of mechanisms to reduce losses associated with emergencies and disasters, and to mitigate their impact on development.

CDERA is supporting the focal points and using the HFA as a DRR mechanism. CDERA is also reinforcing existing mechanisms that use cross-sectoral support principles to address disaster risk management (DRM).

We are convinced about the importance of strengthening the sub-regional platform through the development of national platforms, where the public and private sectors participate by drafting and implementing a common agenda, and constantly monitoring and evaluating it.

CDERA makes governments more aware and is working with one of the key areas aimed at mobilizing resources with partner agencies, in order to mitigate existing risks and their manifestations when disaster occurs

Lobbying and advocacy with participating States continue, in order to form open, broad national platforms. The regional platform needs to come to a greater understanding of countries’ real needs.

It is recommended that sub-regions link up and that a progress report on disaster risk reduction in the region be prepared....”

Challenges for the Platform:

- Link up regional agencies through UNISDR
- Develop a common regional plan to be presented at the Global Platform
- Foster information sharing among sub-regional platforms
- Apply the principle of participation of all countries of the Americas, from planning through implementation
- Develop the national platforms on the basis of existing mechanisms
- Establish a clear relationship among national platforms through the sub-regional platforms
- National platforms should be promoted so that they strengthen the sub-regional platforms

Lorena Cajas Alban
President pro-tempore
Andean Committee for Disaster Prevention and Relief (CAPRADE)

“...Regarding to the points to be addressed, I suggest that the sub-region and focal points should create a daily agenda to avoid duplication of actions.

In this sub-region, the national platforms are the institutions that make up national disaster risk management systems.

It would be advisable to include in the agendas what each national platform is doing, in order to avoid redundancy and take advantage of the store of experiences, data and information.



Consensus-building processes among countries and agencies should continue, in order to prevent each country from focusing only on its own geographic area, ignoring that its neighbor and partners are conducting exercises that may be of interest or working on something similar, which, on many occasions, causes duplication of efforts.

National platforms should generate impact at the political level in each country, to get them to fulfill the commitments acquired. Each national platform should become another political body.

One of the hindrances to carry out these actions lies in the fact that the resources are insufficient in each country for moving forward with the initiatives developed by these bodies at global, regional and sub-regional levels, in addition to the fact that it is difficult to secure funds on behalf of the platform.

Positioning of the platforms should be done through specific activities by these countries. Likewise, these platforms should have certain degree of decision-making power, the lifeblood for these types of exercises that are based on political will and resources necessary for making this will carry through. That is why DRM needs to be part of development plans....”

Iván Morales
Executive Secretary
Coordinating Center for the Prevention of Natural Disasters in Central America (CEPREDENAC)

“... The first aspect of the questions we were given was to think about how an organization like CEPREDENAC can support the focal points or the institutions that are leading and working in our countries to develop these platforms and by using the strategies and priorities included in the Hyogo Framework for Action.

The first step is institutional strengthening, which is an effort we can make so that the institutions responsible for addressing these issues can become stronger, but also for them to build their capacity for dialogue with other institutions. The second step is the scientific-technical issue, as we call it, for producing knowledge. The third step is aimed at gearing towards education and training. The fourth point is the issue of territorial management, where we also have a mandate to help countries understand how to use this approach, including the territorial variable, where substantial differences within and among the countries can be seen. Finally, the issue that is practically mandatory for all of us: the approach to preparedness and response, and we have been able to reach agreement on this in the region through a biannual plan that has just begun and that defines the guidelines for common work in this field.

Our constitution requires us at CEPREDENAC to offer a service so that countries do not only think in terms of disasters, but also in terms of risk management and therefore in terms of development. This is documented in our strategic framework, in our disaster reduction plan and also in our articles of agreement; that is to say, in our policy framework.

Regarding the reasons for creating the national platforms, in principle, the most important thing is to build the capacities of our institutions, opening up the debate and having the capacity to sit down with other actors around the same table.



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This type of dialogue enables us to learn about the many and varied problems faced by those who are involved in decision-making on national budgets and public development policy; those who have to legislate, and therefore to understand how and help us move from a DRR discourse to action.

As in the case of Central America, with the growing problems concerning, for example, violence, food security, climate change, etc., we want them to forget about that agenda so they assume ours, and we think that this means sitting at the table to talk about and explain risk management from our own viewpoint, but it must also mean that we have the capacity to understand how essentially important other issues are, and that we are capable then of proposing instruments that may be useful to those who prepare the budgets, to those who make public policy, to those who legislate, to those who manage territories....”

Camilo Suárez
MERCOSOARES

“...Currently, MERCOSUR recognizes that emergencies and disasters are already occurring more frequently in our countries, including cross-border disasters.

Participants in this meeting of the Regional Platform, in particular those from MERCOSUR countries, have taken advantage of this opportunity to meet and to consider the possibility of creating the sub-regional platform. To this end, we are going to seek practical coordination mechanisms, in the sense of looking at the existing regulatory level in each State and comparing them, in order to adapt it to the sub-regional level.

We say this with the proviso that we are not creating the sub-regional platform of the South, but we do intend to establish a technical-political team and meet in the city of Asunción, Paraguay next April, together with the foreign ministries of these countries to prepare a document that sets out the way forward in adopting the HFA and interregional implementation.

This document will be taken to the upcoming summit of MERCOSUR presidents in June. We will seek an opportunity for the presidents to sign this document, which refers to the issue of DRM in the region, and for them to encourage all member States to adopt regional integration mechanisms.

To do this, it is necessary to have the collaboration of UNISDR, to achieve our intentions....”



Conclusions and Recommendations

- The issue has been gaining political space in the region.
- Better networking and horizontal cooperation is being achieved.
- The emphasis of actions is still on response, although serious DRR research efforts can be seen, but they are still not linked to decision-making.
- The need to continue counting on international cooperation and technical assistance is a demand of the countries and organizations .
- It is foreseen that there will be an enormous impact from disasters in different countries.
- The impact that the HFA has had on the design of policies and strategies in the different sub-regions and countries stands out. It is often used as a reference point.
- There is the need to link the development agenda to the ones related to disaster reduction and adaptation to climate change .
- There is the need to invite civil society and get it more involved so that all its segments join and are part of the national, sub-regional and regional platforms.
- Risks should be looked at globally, but with DRR actions at the local level, and to this end, they should be included in a common agenda for the future..



Third Plenary Session

Moderator: Pablo González, OAS/DDS
Rapporteur: Susana González



Part A

The plenary session began with presentations by each of the thematic session coordinators, which included conclusions and recommendations, along with the challenges to be faced by 2015. All coordinators used the same summary template (see Annex 5). Then, Stephen Bender, Franklin McDonald and David Smith, independent expert consultants, were given the floor and they made several additional comments during the plenary.

Parte B

Hemisphere-wide Remarks

“...In the context of the preparations for the first session and the discussions on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) and on the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policy on Vulnerability Reduction, Risk Management and Disaster Response (IASP), the road ahead is focused on the following priorities and guidelines for regional action:

1. Use development goals, processes and outputs as the primary and preferred means for reducing the vulnerability of population groups, particular the poorest ones. In order to achieve this, there is the need to review the implementation of the HFA and identify the priorities to be addressed between 2010 and 2015.



2. Continue building national capacities to prepare for and respond to emergencies caused by natural hazards, with special attention to those of atmospheric and hydrological origin associated with climate variability.
3. Recognizing the breadth, presence and possible contribution of all actors in the public and private sector, as well as within civil society, strengthen dialogue, coordination and experience sharing with the inter-institutional, multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary mechanisms associated with them. Strengthen dialogue and participation at the regional level through the Inter-American System and other bodies, and at the sub-regional level by intergovernmental agencies and their specialized agencies by sector and cross-cutting issues.

Remarks on Central America

1. The work of the Regional Platform will not involve technical or operating management, but rather political and strategic management.
2. The Regional Platform will be a strategic and political advocate and will support national platforms.
3. The Regional Platform shall have the political and strategic support of the legally constituted authorities on the (ad hoc) sub-regional platforms, which are SICA, CARICOM, the ACS, CAN and probably MERCOSUR.
4. Development issues and sectoral responsibilities (at sub-regional and regional levels) shall be central topics in the work done by the Regional Platform.
5. These, in turn, could become a consultation and coordination means for the Regional Platform.
6. There is still the need to define the concrete responsibilities of the OAS and UNISDR/Américas in the overall organization and operation of the Regional Platform.
7. We can think that currently regional platforms do not exist or that they are barely in the process of being developed. This is also the case of the sub-regional platforms in certain regions.
8. There is a major challenge being able to link countries to institutions, institutions to sectors, and sectors among each other, so that we can all meet the desired goal of reducing the risk of disasters.

Remarks on the Caribbean

The work done in recent years on the issue of disaster risk reduction has still not reached all communities at risk.

Much of the work that we do is conceived and directed by countries or by the international agencies that address the issue of DRR, but communities are the ones that should do the local work by taking actions aimed at decreasing vulnerability, jointly with these bodies.

1. We cannot ignore existing cooperation mechanisms for addressing risk management from a local perspective. This region, in particular, has had the support of these agencies for the sectors committed to or responsible for DRM.
2. Climate change specialists have stressed that we should expect climate conditions that will be different from the normal ones. Therefore, we must consider and model some future scenarios in order to move forward and seek mechanisms or strategies for adapting ourselves to the new conditions.



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3. Platform should serve for gathering venues, for meeting and integrating all actors who should be actively involved in DRR, with no exceptions.
4. We must think very seriously along the lines of continuing with existing initiatives or implementing new and more DRR initiatives. Therefore, I believe that we face the challenge of establishing a means for sustainability, so that these mechanisms go from discourse to reality and practice.
5. The Platform should be the concept to use, in order to establish new alliances and coalitions of strategic bodies at all levels (national, sub-regional, regional and global), so that we put existing DRR initiatives into effect.
6. Though the UNISDR secretariat, we must insist on sharing with other platforms, such as the one for Asia and the Pacific, the progress made and our own experiences, in order to contribute as a region to the global strategy. In this hemisphere, we have some significant experiences to share, and we could also learn from others.





Fourth Plenary Session

Moderators: Sálvano Briceño, UNISDR
Pablo González, OAS/DSD
Rapporteur: Susana González
Panelist: Lars Bernd, UNISDR



The session began with a presentation by Lars Bernd on the program for the second session of the Global Platform, to be held on June 16-19 2009, in Geneva, Switzerland. The presentation was followed by several final thoughts and conclusions by the UNISDR and OAS/DSD, along with remarks by several focal points.

“...The Global Platform is the primary consultative forum on disaster risk reduction at the global level. It brings together a broad range of actors from different development and humanitarian sectors, and from environmental and scientific fields related to disaster risk reduction. One of its goals is to broaden the political space devoted by governments to disaster risk reduction in all sectors, and to contribute to attaining the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the one related to poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

As a global forum, the Platform will advocate for effective, timely action by nations, communities, all stakeholders and partners for mitigating risk, managing vulnerabilities and reducing disasters....”

It is expected that during these four days of meetings, some 120 governments from around the world and some 105 organizations will attend, with approximately 1,200 participants from around the world.

As part of the support processes for the global meeting, there will be contributions from the regional platforms, keynote speeches on relevant events, key thematic sections, and the global assessment report.

For more information on the global platform and the working agenda, please visit the following website:
www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/GP/



Thematic Sessions

1. Inter-institutional mechanisms, networks and national platforms
2. Health and safe hospitals
3. Water and sanitation
4. Urban environments, risk reduction and development
5. Climate change, disaster risk reduction and development
6. Education
7. Communications
8. Local community development, risk reduction and good governance
9. Information and knowledge management



1. Inter-institutional Mechanisms, Networks and National Platforms

Although the session began with a brief presentation on the concept of National Platforms and some key questions to guide the discussion, the conversation turned quite open, which was enriching, but at the same time did not enable us to identify key information on priorities, outcomes, points of action, main actors, etc.

The representatives from Jamaica, El Salvador and Peru presented the experiences of their National Platforms, which together with the experiences that arose in other countries, helped guide the discussion.

The main focus should be on the National Platforms: despite the opportunity and relevance of having a Regional Platform, efforts should be focused on establishing truly functional National Platforms. This must be a priority for the Regional Platform.



Definition of what a National Platform is: There is the need to invest time in defining what a National Platform is, what type of participation is desirable and feasible...before even beginning to create it. The concrete tasks, mechanisms and approaches may be different from country to country, but the basic recommendations established in the guidelines should be followed: a national platform should create a venue for information and knowledge sharing, for the coordination of different initiatives, etc., without overlooking all relevant local and national decision-making authorities.

High-level government commitment: It is necessary to have strong government leadership. The pressure for having National Platforms should come from different levels. By June, a study should offer input for having an even greater influence at the national level. Recommendations, awareness-raising, support and pressure should use a bottom-up approach (starting from local authorities and networks, to civil society, technical agencies, up to the national level).

Relationship with other mechanisms and structures in the country: When establishing a National Platform, it is advantageous to examine the institutions that the country already has (analyze their structure, their functions, their way of participating, etc.), for the purpose of assessing if the platform should start from scratch or if it could be developed drawing on other already-established structures and processes. However, a balance is needed, since the risk lies in the National Platform merging with an existing structure that attempts to fulfill the functions the platform, but that may show certain weaknesses when this is attempted.

Some of the common potential weaknesses might be:

- Merging the mechanisms and structures aimed at disaster response and preparedness and not having a development approach to risk management and disaster reduction.
- Lack of participation of key actors.

A legal framework should assess and respect each situation on a case-by-case basis, but there is the risk of confusing legal frameworks created for the purpose of regulating mechanisms and structures for certain goals with the possibility of creating a more open forum.

Participatory National Platforms: The involvement of different actors is crucial, including public authorities and administrations, civil society, the Red Cross, the private sector, the mass media, and the academic sector. There is some concern because in certain cases the representatives might not be as participatory as they could be, which challenges the functioning of the platform.

In some cases, countries face challenges in identifying the key actors. The ISDR inventory of associations needs to be disseminated and taken into consideration.

Integration of different sectors into DRR: The National Platforms should integrate different sectors, assessing the needs and capacities of each country.

Lack of empowerment of DRR by development actors: Key development actors have not been empowered and hence they are not integrating disaster risk reduction into development interventions, since it is still seen more as a matter of response/preparedness. DRR and the National Platforms should be considered as a development issue.



2. Health and Safe Hospitals

Thematic Coordinator: Ciro Ugarte, PAHO/WHO

Rapporteur: Rocío Sáenz, National University of Costa Rica

The thematic session on health and safe hospitals focused on analyzing the issues, difficulties and successful strategies related to the protection of health facilities from the perspective of national disaster prevention and response systems. Lessons learned were analyzed regarding the implementation of national and sub-national safe hospitals programs, the responsibility of civil protection systems in assessing the safety of health facilities, the importance of the new Caribbean Basin Wind Hazard Map, the role of these facilities in the context of multi-sector response plans, the results of the use of rapid, simple, low-cost instruments for assessing safety in the event of disasters, and the strategies for funding risk reduction in hospitals and other critical services

Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
Regional Sub-regional National Sub-national Local	One of the primary goals of disaster risk reduction is to save lives and reduce human suffering. Therefore, it is imperative to protect infrastructure and critical services, especially those whose main function is to save lives and provide urgent healthcare services at a time when they are most needed.	Making hospitals safe from disasters is no longer the sole responsibility of the health sector. In line with the HFA, it will be necessary that national disaster systems and international risk reduction mechanisms implement specific safety programs in order to ensure that critical services remain operational at local, sub-national and national levels.	Incorporate the tasks of protecting and maintaining the safety of critical infrastructure into national systems for disaster prevention and response. Implement national safe hospital programs with participation of a number of institutions.	National systems for disaster prevention and response CDERA CEPRENAC CAPRADE UNISDR OAS PAHO/WHO.	Implementation of national safe hospital programs in various countries of the region.
	Although the health sector is a key actor in the field of risk reduction, it is often excluded from decisions related to the design of sustainable development and DRR policies.	Develop an agenda for sustainable development.			
	Disasters often widen the existing gaps, creating additional and more serious needs. However, the impact of disasters on health in general is not assessed appropriately.	Incorporate ways to measure mortality and chronic diseases after a disaster into existing assessment models. Advance the development of methodologies and the integration of information systems.			



Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
	<p>Approximately 67% of the nearly 18,000 hospitals in Latin America and the Caribbean are located in areas prone to natural hazards. Assessing the safety of these hospitals represent a major challenge, in particular when traditional vulnerability assessment procedures are used.</p>	<p>General application of tools for rapid and low-cost preliminary assessment, in order to classify and prioritize interventions in less safe services that are essential for the lives and health of the affected communities.</p>	<p>Keep an updated inventory of health facilities located in high-risk areas.</p> <p>Assess the level of safety in priority health facilities located in natural hazard areas.</p> <p>Follow up on the progress made by interventions in critical infrastructure in order to make it safe from disasters.</p>		<p>A number of methodologies and tools for safety inspections are in place.</p> <p>Application and use of the Hospital Safety Index in the Americas, as a tool for identifying priority hospitals.</p> <p>Creation, training and certification of multi-institutional teams for assessing hospital safety in at least 16 countries of the region.</p> <p>There are new training tools available for hospital safety (virtual hospital).</p> <p>The creation of a disaster prevention fund, in order to improve safety in critical health facilities.</p>
	<p>After many decades, some countries have begun a process aimed at building new hospitals and hundreds of new first and second-level health facilities.</p>	<p>Establish national mechanisms for ensuring that new health structures comply with safety standards, allowing them to remain operational on a daily basis, as well as in case of an emergency or a disaster.</p> <p>Strengthen national capacities for diagnosing, prioritizing and intervening in critical services regarding their safety.</p>	<p>Ensure regulatory frameworks for healthcare services.</p> <p>Mobilize resources.</p> <p>Incorporate new wind hazard maps into the design of hospitals in the Caribbean Basin.</p> <p>Implement safe critical infrastructure programs (schools, hospitals, first response, water services, etc.) within safe hospital programs, as a priority for public policy related to disaster risk reduction.</p> <p>Establish specific protection standards for health facilities.</p>	<p>Health services Social security Private health services Standards development organizations National emergency and/ or disaster systems.</p>	<p>Ensuring that all these healthcare services are safe from disasters is not an easy task. Some valuable practical experiences have been gained by facing this challenge, and they should be applied to other sectors as well.</p>



3. Water and Sanitation

Thematic Coordinator: José E. Ballesteros

GAP	OPPORTUNITY	CHALLENGE
<p>Weakness and lack of cooperation and joint work among the following sectors: water, environment, civil protection, health, and relevant control bodies at the national level and with funding institutions. This has led to the development of scattered projects.</p> <p>Institutions and professionals within the rural water and sanitation sector are not trained in risk-related issues and, therefore, risk is not taken into consideration in the design, construction, operation and maintenance, and institutional management of water and sanitation.</p> <p>Existing technical standards within the sanitation and water sector were developed considering urban areas only. Rural areas and risk management measures were not taken into account.</p>	<p>The possibility of gathering water and sanitation workers with risk management experts from international funding organizations in cross-sectoral meetings to coordinate efforts.</p> <p>Availability of guides or tools like the ones developed by PAHO/WHO for risk and emergency assessments related to water and sanitation.</p> <p>The experience gained by NGOs and international cooperation organizations regarding alternative technologies in order to provide water and sanitation services to communities affected by disasters.</p>	<p>Coordinate efforts between organizations and ongoing and future projects. The first step for this is to share environmental and sectoral information (information management) as well as risk maps (for instance, linking environmental issues to this sector, so that water resources and basins are preserved as the first step for risk reduction).</p> <p>Homologate and adapt existing tools taking into account each country's conditions, in order to train water and sanitation technical and professional staff in risk management, and train civil protection experts in water and sanitation-related issues.</p> <p>Review, adapt and update water and sanitation technical standards, taking into account and distinguishing nucleated from scattered rural communities, and including environmental and risk management.</p>



4. Urban environments, risk management and development

Thematic Coordinator: Fernando Ramírez

Critical factors	Priority actions	Level of action(s)	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
<p>Low technical capacity of local governments. Low level of awareness among politicians (risk management is not a priority). Gaps between technical staff and decision-makers. Limited access to specialized information. Lack of research policies. Lack of an urban culture and education.</p>	<p>Build capacities. Train public officials in risk management. Promote research on urban risk-related issues. Raise awareness among citizens and political authorities. Develop strategies for communicating and disseminating risk management in urban environments. Manage urban risk information throughout the LAC region.</p>	At all levels	<p>Increase and optimize specialized training courses. Develop research projects on urban risk with adequate technical and financial support. Develop materials to be disseminated in support of local governments. Carry out awareness activities intended for mayors /local authorities. Create an urban risk observatory. Establish a databank that includes specialized technical information. Develop specific projects aimed at systematizing experiences and provide them with adequate support and funding.</p>	<p>International agencies Local and regional governments Municipal federations Professional associations Insurance companies Private companies Utility companies Universities Religious groups Standards development organizations.</p>	
<p>Weak regulatory frameworks. Lack of land-use plans that incorporate risk management, and those that include RM are not implemented. Lack of balance between rural and urban planning processes. Uncontrolled urban growth processes.</p>	<p>Strengthen land-use policies and instruments. Strengthen regulatory instruments.</p>		<p>Increase land-use plans that incorporate risk management. Increase or adapt specific risk management standards for urban environments.</p>		
<p>Lack of continuity regarding local governments' policies. Weak inter-institutional coordination at different levels. Limited financial resources.</p>	<p>Strengthen local governments. Support cities that develop risk management projects. Support horizontal cooperation among cities.</p>		<p>Support local governments regarding technical and financial resources for risk management projects. Develop and support cooperation projects among cities. Develop strategic alliances with donors and cooperation agencies to support horizontal cooperation projects.</p>		

Rapporteur: Olga Lozano



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5. Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction and Development

Thematic Coordinator: Juan Pedro Searle

Rapporteurs: Alberto Aquino and Julio García

Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
National Sub-regional	1. Vulnerability reduction is incorporated into development planning.	Facilitate access to national and international financial and cooperation mechanisms for DRR and CC. Promote the exchange of information and knowledge about DRR and CC through existing networks. Systematize successful experiences, identifying the advantages of vulnerability reduction. Foster coordination between the fields of CC and DRR.	2015: Planning and investment systems have included CC and DRR criteria in their regulatory frameworks. 2011: Supported by UNISDR, National Platforms have guidelines to include DRR and CC in development planning and investment systems. 2013: Each country in LAC has a regulatory proposal that institutionalizes CC and DRR within public administration.	Planning ministries from all LAC countries. Finance ministries from all LAC countries. Economy ministries from all LAC countries. Environment ministries from all LAC countries.	
National	2. Strategic sectors show concrete results in terms of vulnerability reduction.	Foster the exchange of methodologies for vulnerability analyses. Promote integrated vulnerability assessments. Assess the economic impact of existing risks.	2015: Each sector from all LAC countries is committed to reducing vulnerability through DRR and CC mechanisms. 2011: Knowledge about new risks derived from CC is integrated into decision-making processes. 2013: Sectors are committed to identifying and measuring vulnerability through CC and DRR mechanisms.	Strategic sectors chosen per country.	
National Sub-regional Regional	3. Public and private institutions build their capacity for reducing vulnerability.	Build capacities among officials responsible for planning CC and DRR-related issues. Improve mechanisms for decision-makers and bodies responsible for generating information.	2015: Decisions are made taking into account information produced by experts in DRR and CC. 2011: DRR and CC mechanisms work in a coordinated manner in order to reduce vulnerability. 2013: Information flows are in place to favor vulnerability reduction, taking into account the HFA	National Platforms for DRR National commissions on climate change	



6. Education

Thematic Coordinator: Astrid Hollander, UNESCO

Rapporteurs: Claudio Osorio, UNICEF, and Astrid Hollander, UNESCO

Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote risk management in an inclusive manner within the education sector, particularly taking into account disabled people. - Technical support and cooperation must be coordinated with the Ministries of Education. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DRR curricular proposals from the Ministries of Education must be accompanied by the training of higher education teachers. 2. Assess risk management regulations that define the role of the education sectors, as well as the critical constraints that hinder their implementation. 3. Promote the development of methodologies and tools that contribute to the safety of school infrastructure. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systematization of experiences in teacher training completed. 2. Teacher training proposals prepared to respond to curricula needs in specific countries. 3. A diagnosis document prepared regarding existing RM regulations within the education sector. The document includes actions recommended for developing such regulations in LAC countries. 4. Systems harmonized to analyze and reduce vulnerabilities in education centers. 	UNESCO, UNICEF, UNISDR, Plan International, Save the Children, Ministries of Education, ITDG, OAS.	
Sub-regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote exchanges among sub-regional bodies for horizontal cooperation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Map national school plan models that exist throughout the region. 2. Systematize DRM tools and experiences within the education sector. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A regional RM school plan designed. 2. Documents, tools and experiences systematized and available through a DRM education portal. 	CECC/SICA, CEPREDENAC, CAPRADE, CDERA, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNISDR, Plan International, Save the Children, Ministries of Education, ITDG, OAS	



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Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish within the education sector coordination efforts among thematic areas and territorial delegations of the Ministry of Education. - The Ministries of Education must establish coordination and collaboration links with national institutions at different levels. - Include RM in formal education system development planning (primary and secondary schools) - Allocate adequate budgets to ensure sustainability and continuity of RM-related actions. - National risk management systems must acknowledge the role of Ministries of Education and build their capacities. - Define the roles of institutions and related instruments. - Integrate civil society institutions with creativity and the creation of alliances. - The Ministries of Education should consider the philosophy and knowledge of original peoples regarding RM. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ministries of Education should have policies, strategic plans, tools and human resources in charge of RM. 2. Promote/support the creation or the strengthening of sectoral education boards. 3. Promote schools as the last resource for temporary shelters and, when unavoidable, consider this possibility in school plans. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policies, strategic plans, tools and human resources developed by the Ministries of Education and available at the national level. 2. Sectoral boards established and coordinated by the Ministries of Education. 3. Information and evidence generated regarding the impact of schools as shelters on children, in order to change legal instruments/ practices on the use of schools as shelters. 	<p>Ministries of Education (national curriculum adaptation bureaus, infrastructure, environmental education, planning/budgeting, educational community, school centers), teachers guilds, national risk management systems, legislative bodies, local governments, social organizations, ministries of social development and the environment, media outlets, cooperation agencies (NGOs, the UN), private sector.</p>	



7. Communications Management: Basis of the Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction

Thematic Coordinator: Gloria Bratschi

Rapporteur: Rebeca Madrigal

Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
Regional and sub-regional	<p>1. This topic is not a priority and is not considered a cross-cutting issue. It should be the backbone of risk reduction.</p> <p>2. Insufficient dissemination of the HFA among key sectors (formal education, the population at large, the private sector, etc.)</p> <p>3. Prevention messages are generated <i>en masse</i> without considering the characteristics of each target group. These messages do not promote resilience and local capacities.</p> <p>4. Language used is too technical. This hinders the message effectiveness.</p>	<p>1. First, train decision-makers and key actors in the field of risk management.</p> <p>2. Strengthen institutional communications.</p> <p>3. Share the MAH contents, starting with its strategic objectives and priorities for action.</p> <p>4. Design communications strategies based on the characteristics of target groups.</p> <p>5. Adapt messages with the active participation of communicators, multidisciplinary teams and target audiences.</p>	<p>1. Inclusion of strategic communications in all risk management projects.</p> <p>2. Communications integrated into all processes.</p> <p>3. Democratization of knowledge and greater orientation of regional actions aimed at reducing vulnerability.</p> <p>4. Communities perceive their weakness and discover their capacities for reducing the impact of existing risks.</p> <p>5. Populations are aware and modify their behavior and conduct, and actively participate in risk management.</p>	<p>1. States, national and international organizations, officials, technical managers, etc.</p> <p>2. International organizations, government institutions, civil society associations, community leaders, the population at large and media outlets.</p> <p>3. Institutional communicators, target groups, institutions belonging to emergency prevention and response systems.</p> <p>4. Technical experts and communications specialists, academic sector and scientific research institutions.</p>	



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Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
National	<p>1. Communication is not considered a cross-cutting issue for the attainment of the MAH priorities.</p> <p>2. Decision-makers are not clear on the difference between informing and communicating. For this reason, they only seek to establish contact with the media and they do not foster sustainable relationships (processes).</p> <p>3. Communication is associated with media outlets (fragmented, fleeting messages, and instant consumption). Other alternative communication means are not taken into account.</p> <p>4. Messages do not change attitudes and behavior due to their verticality and imposition. They do not promote community participation.</p> <p>5. The needs of communicators and other professionals specialized in this topic.</p>	<p>1. Get communicators involved as consultants and advisors, whose interventions lead to consolidating and invigorating the HFA priorities for action.</p> <p>2. Carry out communications training sessions and ongoing consulting work in order to convey proactive messages.</p> <p>3. Turn to new communications means, since media outlets have limitations in terms of time, space and thematic agendas. There is the need to shift paradigms.</p> <p>4. Redirect strategies, focusing on creating messages jointly with target audiences.</p> <p>5. Promote graduate courses and other actions within formal and non-formal education. Include this topic in tertiary curricula and higher education.</p>	<p>1. Adherence to the Hyogo Framework for Action and multi-sectoral commitments.</p> <p>2. The media should become a partner in risk management.</p> <p>3. A paradigm shift is fostered so that alternative and participatory communications tools are used.</p> <p>4. Knowledge transfer and a change of attitude that promotes self-protection, preparedness and mitigation proposals.</p> <p>5. Communicators are trained so that they can provide advisory services in line with the new institutional and social requirements.</p>	<p>1. States, national and international organizations, officials, technical managers, academic sector and scientific research institutions.</p> <p>2. States, national and international organizations, officials, technical managers, academic sector and scientific research institutions, media outlets.</p> <p>3. National and international organizations, officials, managers, technical staff, multidisciplinary teams, and target groups.</p> <p>4. National and international organizations, officials, managers, technical staff, multidisciplinary teams, and target groups.</p> <p>5. Universities, research centers, specialized institutions, professional associations, civil society organizations, etc.</p>	



8. Local Community Development, Risk Reduction and Good Governance

Thematic Coordinator: Alicce Vozza

Rapporteur: Marjorie Soto Franco

Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
Regional	<p>Lack of access to information.</p> <p>Local risk management has not become a cross-cutting issue in development processes. Greater emphasis on concrete actions.</p> <p>Lack of linkages between DRR actors and development sectors.</p> <p>Risk of overlapping competencies, roles, and responsibilities among the same actors.</p> <p>A number of issues to be addressed and prioritized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social - Geographic - Political - Economic 	<p>Conduct awareness and advocacy campaigns at the regional level regarding the importance of local development. For example, the UNISDR biannual campaign.</p> <p>Conduct a hemisphere-wide diagnosis regarding the progress made in integrating DRR into local development.</p> <p>UNISDR facilitates the exchange of lessons learned.</p>	<p>1. Awareness raising among local and national authorities, and communities regarding the importance of local development.</p> <p>2. Main gaps in integrating DRR into local development are identified and progress in this area is acknowledged.</p> <p>3. Systematization of experiences and practices regarding local development and DRR.</p>	<p>UNISDR and cooperation agencies working at the regional level.</p> <p>Stakeholders at all level. For example, a regional platform (civil society, local and national governments, the private sector, universities, etc.)</p> <p>There is the need to establish links between actors at all levels (regional – sub-regional – national – local).</p>	<p>Important: change the concept of successful experiences with “evaluation of practices”.</p> <p>Harmonize the methodology used in vulnerability and capacity assessments (VCA), as a starting point for DRR decision-making by the Red Cross throughout the Americas.</p>



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Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
Sub-regional	<p>MERCOSUR does not have a body responsible for DRR (its focus is primarily on trade).</p> <p>Dialogue among bodies and institutions is not based on complementing cooperation among them, but on making evident their level of diversity.</p> <p>Shortcomings regarding the financial sustainability of sub-regional mechanisms.</p>	<p>UNISDR facilitates a contest and rewards municipalities that manage DRR in a better manner.</p> <p>Strengthen coordination mechanisms (SICA, CAN, CARICOM) leading to the same goals and objectives.</p> <p>Support the adoption of legal mechanisms in each country that contribute to establishing sustainable development strategies based on common ground at the regional level.</p>	<p>1. Incentive mechanisms in place in order to foster DRR in local development.</p> <p>2. Integration systems strengthened legally, technically and financially, in line with each country's reality and the sub-regional goals and objectives.</p>	<p>Presidents Ministries of Foreign Affairs National systems</p> <p>CAPRADE committees, REDLAC</p>	<p>Technical integration bodies are in place, as well as regional strategies that integrate knowledge, support capacities and information linkages.</p> <p>These bodies have increased the level of interest and participation of heads of State, and the need to take on greater responsibility, raise awareness and develop knowledge about regional issues and the need for integration and regional support.</p>



Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
National	<p>Lack of standards or their implementation, and binding actions.</p> <p>Lack of clear roles and/or competencies of key stakeholders.</p> <p>Existing national systems must be strengthened.</p> <p>Weaknesses regarding coordination, leadership and governance, and absence of incentive instruments for DRR.</p> <p>Weak budgeting and planning processes.</p>	<p>Strengthen national systems and their bodies, applying a RM approach. Foster the development of exchange systems.</p> <p>Create effective instruments that allow to fulfill roles and responsibilities (obligations and recognition).</p> <p>Strengthen the relationship and links between preparedness and response and national and local development planning.</p> <p>Allocate resources to local governments, so that they can fulfill their responsibilities regarding local development and DRR (foster decentralization).</p> <p>Integrate land-use into planning processes, as well as knowledge about integrated risk management.</p>	<p>1. National systems are strengthened and leaders' technical, human and financial capacities are built.</p> <p>2. Regulatory frameworks are clear and updated, in line with existing risk management guidelines.</p> <p>3. Inter-institutional dialogue (agreements) is held to define roles and competencies.</p> <p>4. A platform for technical planning is in place at the sub-regional level.</p> <p>5. Public investment plans for DRR are in place. These include decentralized competencies (Example: Peru)</p> <p>6. Guidelines developed at the national level to foster and facilitate strategic planning, focusing on risk at the local level.</p>	<p>Executive branch Congress Public institutions Private bodies Civil society NGOs International cooperation agencies Guilds National systems Environmental and planning authorities Technical bodies Operational bodies</p>	<p>Peru has made progress in the area of decentralization.</p> <p>New tools at the national level should be developed based on local practices and territorial knowledge that integrates risk management (although it might not be called RM).</p> <p>Decentralized development systems are in place (for instance, in Brazil and Colombia).</p> <p>Important efforts have been made and DRR has been included on the agenda of various countries. In addition, government plans are already including RM in their projects as a relevant cross-cutting issue.</p> <p>Joint efforts are made based on territorial planning that includes risk management.</p> <p>Technical assessment instruments have been developed in Nicaragua at the national level.</p>



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Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
Local	<p>Lack (or limited) local specialized technical capacity.</p> <p>Lack of a culture that focuses on risk.</p> <p>Lack of awareness about responsibilities of local governments.</p> <p>Political aspects prevail over technical ones. Partisanship hinders local strengthening.</p> <p>Paternalism hinders local governance.</p> <p>Lack of communication and information at the local level.</p> <p>Institutional communication as a cross-cutting issue is limited.</p> <p>Land-use planning is limited and citizen participation in decision-making is weak.</p> <p>Responsibilities and competencies are transferred from national to local governments. However, resources are not transferred in a proportionate manner, and local governments cannot fulfill these responsibilities. This also hinders integration of RM at the local level.</p>	<p>Officials and professional staff must be trained to avoid turnover-related problems.</p> <p>Transfer risk management capacities.</p> <p>Foster local land-use planning.</p> <p>Strengthen training and risk management sharing processes.</p> <p>Institutionalize citizen participation in planning processes.</p>	<p>1. Education and communication processes (awareness campaigns).</p> <p>2. Institutionalize effective compliance with existing standards.</p> <p>3. Strengthen local risk management capacity, technical knowledge, planning processes, training and public information.</p> <p>4. Formulate, implement and share integrated risk management plans.</p> <p>5. Institutionalize citizen participation and methodological guides for planning processes.</p> <p>6. Establish legal mechanisms that have clear roles and responsibilities, and include incentives.</p>	<p>Municipalities and local governments.</p> <p>The population in general.</p> <p>The private sectors Employers' organizations Unions.</p> <p>It is important to identify political, economic and social powers.</p> <p>NGOs.</p> <p>The international community.</p> <p>National organizations.</p>	<p>Reproduce similar experiences in other municipalities.</p> <p>Local development projects funded by GTZ in Guatemala and El Salvador.</p> <p>Telica river basin communities in Nicaragua.</p> <p>Projects for strengthening local technical capacity should be duplicated in other municipalities, with active community participation: families, neighborhoods, and education communities (IFRC in Central America).</p> <p>Work is done with a number of institutions and with participation of private and international cooperation organizations at national and local levels.</p>



9. Information and Knowledge Management

Thematic Coordinator: Isabel López Gordo, CRID

Rapporteurs: Luis Carlos Martínez Medina, UNISDR Consultant

This session focused on reviewing the current status of information management throughout the region and its evolution in recent years, pointing out critical factors and priority actions to be taken.

Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
At all levels (regional, sub-regional, national and local)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information is redundant (risk of information overload because it is not refined). - Information is scattered. - Information quality and reliability are cause for concern. In addition, there is high-quality information but it needs to be filtered, classified and made available. - Access to information is difficult. - Lack of evidence-based information in the field of risk management. - Lack of institutional commitment. - Gaps (both in terms of access and contents). - Information does not reach local levels. - Information is not shared. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create synergies through existing networks. - Improve systems and tools for monitoring phenomena. - Have more accurate information about different phenomena. - Create tools that facilitate the dissemination of information in this field (For example, specialized journals). - Promote research: strengthen research lines and allocate more funds. For instance, the Inter-American Development Bank could promote a high-level research contest. - Invest in information, ensuring its quality and specialization. - Promote that search and access tools are open-source. - Improve strategies for searching and retrieving information. - Achieve greater and better levels of integration, complementarity and coordination among existing regional initiatives. - Standardize tools and formats related to information management. - The Regional Platform can create mechanisms to advise, follow up and establish better synergies with its partners. 	<p>National platforms are in place as venues to share actions and information sources, and use existing resources in a more efficient manner.</p> <p>Instruments and systems for monitoring phenomena are improved.</p> <p>Initiatives are adopted to improve research on risk management, and tools are created in order to ensure its dissemination.</p> <p>International cooperation facilitates information management and creates synergies with existing work, contributing to complementing national and regional efforts underway.</p> <p>Institutions show greater commitment to and support for actions related to information management.</p> <p>Platforms and initiatives related to information are more and better integrated in terms of their methodologies, standards and processes.</p>	<p>UNISDR OAS PAHO/WHO CRID UNOOSA, UN-SPIDER REDULAC Prevention Redhum SIAPAD Desinventar (IFRC) Universities University networks</p> <p>N a t i o n a l p l a t f o r m s C A P R A D E</p>	



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Level of action(s)	Critical factors	Priority actions	Expected outcomes 2011 / 2015 (by action)	Key actors and agencies	Successful experiences / good practices
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Platforms are the most adequate forum to create more and better information and use existing resources in a more efficient manner. - Seek more sustained support from donors by creating synergies and complementing national efforts. - Apply the concept of networks and systems in a more efficient manner (using the principle of complementarity). - Get universities involved and support existing networks. - Promote the creation of thematic/ cross-sectoral platforms. - Improve the technical and technological capacity of national organizations. - Train professionals in information and risk management. - Bring information down to local actors who need it (specialized information for different audiences, decentralize information, etc.) 	<p>Information is more specialized and is adapted to users at different levels.</p> <p>Decentralized information is accessible at the local level.</p> <p>There are more and better trained human resources to face the challenges of information and knowledge management.</p> <p>Thematic platforms are established (for instance, satellite information).</p>		



VI. Closing Session

The closing session was led by Sálvano Briceño, Director of the UNISDR; Luis Francisco Sucre, Director of Panama's National System of Civil Protection (SINAPROC); and Pablo González of the OAS/DSD, who urged the participants to continue working comprehensively on disaster risk reduction in our region. Thanks were also expressed to all the people involved in organizing this activity.

VII. Conclusions/Observations

The conclusions have been extracted from the presentations by the different panelists and participants in the meeting.

On Risk Management

Disasters in the region are increasing, especially those produced by increasingly intense extreme climate phenomena.

Disaster risk is affecting poor rural and urban populations with greater force in our region, speeding up the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

There is the need to include more emphatically aspects related to climate change, local development, citizen participation, safety of critical infrastructure, health, water and sanitation, education and communications in the development of the Global Platform, as priorities for 2010-2015.

There is recognition of the advances in each country and the region in general in terms of improving disaster response, but it must be pointed out that much still needs to be done around proactive actions to address existing risk, understanding that this is a key element in development planning.

It was underscored that there is the need to place emphasis on inter-institutional or multi-sectoral mechanisms for strengthening risk management at regional, national and local levels.

On the Thematic Sessions

Inter-institutional Mechanisms, Networks and National Platforms

The use of existing mechanisms to develop the National Platforms, expanding their scope to all aspects of risk management, and integrating all segments of civil society and sectors.

The creation of National Platforms that address priority thematic areas, according to national development



agendas. For this reason, it can be expected that each National Platform will have its own make-up, in accordance with the key actors involved in risk management in those priority areas.

Convening actors based on the development agenda results in more inclusive platforms.

International financial institutions, development banks, multilateral cooperation agencies and donors could promote the integration of risk management into development agendas at the highest government levels and among prime ministers and presidents.

There is recognition of the need to support implementation of the National Platforms based on pilot actions at regional, state and local levels, and the need to develop these around specific economic and production sectors.

Emphasis must be given to the need to develop National Platforms around development agendas, and not limit them to the national response systems.

It was observed that National Platforms are being developed around the national emergency response and preparedness systems. This, on the one hand, facilitates and streamlines the creation of these platforms—especially in those countries where their national emergency systems are more developed, typically in countries that have suffered large-scale catastrophic events and are highly vulnerable. But, on the other hand, this makes them rigid structures and limits the creation of ‘inclusive’ National Platforms, with broad representation from all government levels and sectors of civil society. The development of National Platforms based on platforms in geographical territories and around sectors or specific development issues enables drawing in a wider range of actors—especially risk-producing sectors and actors.

A proposal was made to convene a hemispheric meeting for sharing successful experiences in the development, implementation and sustainability of “institutional mechanisms and networks” for disaster risk reduction.

A proposal was also made for seeking funding for the implementation of projects related to the design and development of the National Platforms, based on local scales and/or priority sectors.

Health and Safe Hospitals

There is the need to implement national safe hospital programs with multi-sector participation.

There is also the need to having a current inventory of health facilities located in risk zones.

The discussions and conclusions of this thematic session are aimed primarily at improving the protection of all critical services, including hospitals, schools, universities, water systems, first-response institutions, emergency operations centers, transportation, communications and others. There is the need to overcome the paradigm of reinforcing infrastructure, so that we can begin the implementation of programs that guarantee the preservation of services.



There is the need to include a risk management component in the planning of the water and sanitation sector.

Urban Environments, Risk Reduction and Development

It was pointed out that there is the need to integrate risk management into land-use plans.

Likewise, it was observed that there is the need to increase the adaptation of specific risk management standards for urban environments and to implement them.

Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction and Development

There is the need for the national planning and public investment systems to include in their regulatory frameworks criteria on adaptation to climate change and DRR.

It is recommended to integrate knowledge on new risks resulting from climate change into decision-making processes.

Education

There is the need for national systems to recognize the role of the Ministries of Education and build their capacities in risk management (RM), avoiding overlapping competencies.

Emphasis is placed on the need to include the RM component in policies for planning education system development.

Communications

It was pointed out that prevention messages should be aimed at specific audiences and at developing resilient communities.

It was emphasized that communications management gives “value” to risk management; it vitalizes, promotes, influences, persuades, and facilitates understanding, and changes behavior and attitudes. The lack of this type of management is also a vulnerability.

It was pointed out that all organizations have a number of communications tools that should be used tactically. In general, when they confuse information with communication, these instruments do not facilitate a positive impact on behavior and attitudes. For this reason, it is necessary to design communications plans and programs that set out short, medium and long range actions.

During periods of community preparedness, as well as for prevention-mitigation, and emergency and disaster response, the strategic use of communications instruments enables better dissemination of messages aimed at the target audience.



It was pointed out that when producing messages aimed at the population, for example, basic information should mention how the sum of hazards plus vulnerabilities leads to risk situations. In this way, the communication of risk would be the confluence or synthesis of information about the hazard and information about the characteristics of vulnerabilities.

Thus, it can be inferred —as was pointed out in this thematic session— that mass communication of risk has “two moments” in practice, from addressing the affected public and private sectors to disaster prevention and response:

- a) Raising public awareness so that people can perceive their exposure to a specific hazard on their own and discover their capacities for reducing the consequences; and
- b) Promoting actions that reduce their vulnerability, so that they adequately prepare to face any event that could turn into a disaster.

It was pointed out that we all communicate, since this is intrinsic to human beings. But for disaster risk reduction, this must be done with clarity, timeliness, adaptability, efficiency and precision; and that is why those who attended this thematic session affirm and reiterate that communications management is also needed. And we add that it should also be a “cross-cutting issue” in the HFA priorities for action.

Local Community Development, Risk Reduction and Good Governance

It was pointed out that the HFA gives importance to the local level, which is crucial to its implementation. The basis for building resilient communities lies in local development, and it is imperative to make this more specific in the priority lines for 2015. For example, it could be the main topic of the biannual UNISDR campaign.

It was highlighted that the role and leadership of local authorities has special importance. Local development offers a forum for social dialogue, which favors the integration of the different sectors in a way that is even more natural; all interests come together in the geographical territory. That is, political-institutional, environmental, economic, productive, and socio-cultural dimensions. It facilitates the active participation of the community and other actors.

There is the need to identify mechanisms for institutionalizing citizen participation.

A fundamental tool that was highlighted was strategic territorial planning for linking DRR to long-term goals. Why not having a thematic platform on planning?

It was emphasized that it has been interesting to debate local development with national bodies. Standards and laws have been one of the topics addressed the most, which means that there is awareness about existing needs.

It was concluded that the region has enormous assets in practices that should be capitalized on and inform strategic lines, in and for many of the communities themselves. This practice can be fed back into policy-making.



Information and Knowledge Management

There is the need to promote research in the area of risk management and develop of instruments that may facilitate its dissemination, relying on existing networks and universities.

It was suggested to establish a thematic platform on information and knowledge management.

An opportunity was seen to obtain more and better information on vulnerability and early warning analysis using satellite and space technology.

There is the need to invest in training specialized human resources, both at regional and national levels.

It was observed that there is greater commitment and institutional support on actions related to knowledge and information management.

It was pointed out that there is a need for greater integration of information initiatives and systems into standards and methodologies.

There is the need to seek more specialized information that responds to certain quality criteria and relevance to users at different levels. There is also the need to decentralize information, in order to bring it down to the local level.

A recommendation was made to establish thematic platforms for using and sharing information (e.g. with satellite information).

Regarding the Regional Platform

The Regional Platform for the Americas is being established as a process and not as an administrative or organic structure, and is grounded in institutional arrangements and regional and sub-regional intergovernmental agencies, primarily the Inter-American system (OAS/GS, IDB, PAHO, IICA, etc.) and regional systems (MERCOSUR, CAN, CARICOM, SICA and ACS). The Regional Platform also includes other segments, such as academia and universities, NGOs, financial institutions, multilateral and bilateral donors, etc. Particular acknowledgement is given to the operating instruments and mechanisms of the Inter-American system, led by the OAS/GS, such as Inter-American Committee for Natural Disaster Reduction (IACNDR); the Inter-American Network for Disaster Mitigation (INDM); and the Inter-American Strategic Plan for Policies on Reduction of Vulnerability, Risk Management and Disaster Response (IASP). These, linked to the capacities of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), will result in a stronger, more effective system for responding to the needs of the region's governments and communities.

It is important to remember the countries and non-sovereign territories of the Greater Caribbean that are not directly represented in the OAS, CEPREDENAC, CAPRADE, ACS or CDERA, but that are nonetheless exposed to multiple hazards and have important knowledge to share.



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The Regional Platform will be identified by its political and strategic work, providing support to the National Platforms. It is recognized that there is the need to support the implementation of the National Platforms and to promote the inclusion of development, risk reduction and climate change issues in these platforms, as effective, efficient mechanisms for disaster risk reduction and for attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

Along these lines, the Regional Platform represents a great opportunity for promoting and strengthening this perspective by way of a new paradigm, through political and strategic work, with broad-based dialogue, primarily with national political authorities (meetings with Heads of State and of Government), sectoral authorities (Ministers of Agriculture and Livestock, Transportation, Education, Health, Tourism, etc.), and territorial authorities (mayors, governors, development councils), in addition to specialized thematic and scientific bodies with sub-regional and regional coverage.

Cooperating agencies were encouraged to continue supporting those countries and States that are the most vulnerable to disasters. In addition, the OAS/GS and the UNISDR were urged to convene a new session of the Regional Platform, which is expected to take place in 2011.

Priority thematic aspects for taking action in the coming years were defined, and there was interest in ensuring the sustainability of this regional forum as a mechanism for closing the gaps among the national, regional and global levels.

Adaptation to climate change, the use of space technology and other risk assessment tools, early warning, information and knowledge management, education and communications, water and sanitation, and the safety of vital infrastructure are all key aspects for ensuring disaster risk reduction and thus ensuring poverty reduction and the social well-being of future generations.

